

**take my breath
away**

nuvvanda

take my breath away by nuvvanda

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King

Genre: (but only a bit?), Because of course he does, Eddie Kaspbrak Lives, First Kiss, Fix-It, Internalized Homophobia, Love Confessions, M/M, Post-IT Chapter Two (2019), also cheesy 80s love songs, if you couldn't tell by the title

Language: English

Characters: Eddie Kaspbrak, Richie Tozier, the other losers aren't really mentioned but They're Out There

Relationships: Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier

Status: Completed

Published: 2019-11-26

Updated: 2019-11-26

Packaged: 2019-12-19 15:19:33

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 14,773

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

“Can you be at the airport in like, eight hours?” Eddie asks, apropos of nothing.

Richie breathes out a short laugh. “Um, what?”

“The airport, idiot, can you be there? I mean, I could, like, Uber to your apartment...house? Do you live in an apartment or a house? Fuck, why haven’t we talked about this before now, I don’t know anything about LA... Anyways, yeah, eight hours, can you do it?” Eddie is rambling, and Richie would be comforted by the familiarity if he had any idea what the fuck was going on.

OR: Eddie comes to LA, and Richie is in love with him.

take my breath away

Author's Note:

thank u so much to becca for being my cheerleader throughout the writing of this (and saving my LIFE), and to fox for reading it over to make sure it was presentable for public consumption !! i love both of u and i'm Grateful as Heck

enjoy please !!

A month after Derry, Richie wakes up in the cistern, gazing up at the ceiling, and thinks: *Fuck, not this again.*

He isn't entirely certain this isn't a dream, but he also isn't entirely certain that it *is*, and everything he can vaguely recall from before this moment—*after this moment?*—simply a trick of the deadlights. It hurts to think about, and his chest feels like it's caving in on itself, his heart beating wildly in his chest, until he sees Eddie's face swim into view above him—then, his heart feels like it stops.

No, he wants to scream, *move out of the way!* Because he knows how this ends, he *knows*, and it—he has to stop it, *he has to save Eddie, he has to.*

Eddie is above him, but he doesn't say anything. No "*Richie! Hey! I think I killed It!*" like before. He just stares, until his mouth opens in a toothy grin, and blood dribbles out from between his teeth. Richie watches in horrified silence as Eddie starts to laugh, and more blood drips from his mouth. Eddie's hands go to his stomach, in the way someone laughing heartily might grab a stitch in their side, except instead of a stitch it's a *hole* Eddie is grabbing, and yet more blood begins to gush from the wound.

Blood is pooling around them, and soon Richie feels himself being tugged under, like he's caught in a river's current and getting pulled down, down, down. He gasps for breath, and coughs as blood is sucked into his lungs. It tastes metallic, and he wants to gag, but that just makes more blood spill into his open mouth. It's horrifying, and Richie has never been so scared in his life.

Eddie's losing too much blood, he thinks manically, there aren't enough blood bags in the entire state of Maine to pump him up again.

Eddie is still laughing, until he isn't anymore, and he's sobbing, begging Richie not to leave him here alone. Richie wants to tell him he won't, wants to promise, but every time he tries to talk he gets a mouthful of blood, and he's choking, still being pulled under, unable to see the surface, quickly losing sight of Eddie through the red haze, and—

Richie's eyes open on a gasp, hands flying to his throat as he coughs violently, clawing at the thick feeling of blood he can still feel closing in around him, dripping down his throat and clogging up his nose. He's breathing heavily, heart beating a mile a minute, and he sits up quickly, looking around frantically. He's not in the cistern, he's at his house in LA, and Eddie—

Richie grabs his phone off of the nightstand, ripping the charging cord out in the process, and, without thinking too hard about it, pulls up Eddie's number. He hugs his knees to his chest, feeling like a kid, and dials.

It rings five times before Eddie picks up with a groggy "H'lo?"

Richie almost panics and hangs up, because *of course* he was sleeping, *god*, was Richie an *idiot*, calling in the middle of the night just because he... what, had a scary dream?

No turning back now, he thinks, and says: “Hey Eds, how’s it hangin’?”, because his desire to hear Eddie’s voice, to confirm that he’s *alive* and not *bleeding out*, outweighs the shame that clogs up his throat the same way the dream-blood had.

Richie hears rustling on the other end of the line, and Eddie says “Richie?”, voice sounding both confused and annoyed, while also being saturated with the kind of slurred softness that only comes from being woken up unexpectedly.

It’s the sweetest sound Richie thinks he’s ever heard, and he feels all the tension in his body suddenly evaporate.

Now that the urgency is gone, though, he realizes that he’s got no idea where to go from here. Ever since getting back from their little Derry Losers Club Reunion, Richie and Eddie have maintained a kind of... distance between them. They both seem to be too nervous to cross the threshold from ‘*Ex-Best Friend*’ into ‘*Current Best Friend*’, or something similar. The Losers all have a group chat, have been in constant contact with one another since going their separate ways, but even though Richie *knows* that the others talk individually, Richie can’t seem to... make himself reach out to Eddie, and Eddie seems to feel the same way—either that, or he doesn’t *want* to reach out, and wouldn’t that be a fuckin’ punch in the dick? So anyways, Richie hasn’t thought about it. Richie talks to Eddie through the Losers group chat, and tries to ignore the feeling in his chest that stinks of loneliness and *missing Eddie*.

Except now he's gone and fucked *that* up, by calling Eddie at an ungodly hour.

Unsure what the fuck to even say, Richie says "The one and only!", trying for casual and missing it by a mile when his voice catches at the end.

"Do you know what fucking time it is, asshole?" Eddie asks, and he sounds slightly more awake now, and definitely more annoyed.

Richie doesn't, actually, but it can't be much later than like, midnight, right? It feels like he just went to sleep five minutes ago, and he remembers it being around 11:40 when he'd crawled into bed. Except when looks at the clock radio by his bed it flashes 1:13 AM back at him. That would make it around 4am for Eddie in New York. Shit.

"Shit," Richie says, laughing weakly. "I hadn't realized what—what time it was. Forgot about the uh, the time differences and whatever?" He hopes he sounds apologetic.

Richie hears Eddie sigh, and it's in the same resigned way he used to sigh as a kid, which meant that he was gonna go along with whatever bullshit Richie had planned, but he was probably gonna complain the whole time. "Did something happen?" he asks.

Richie almost tries one of his Voices, tries to laugh off Eddie's concern and maintain the Distance, but for the first time since

returning home Richie thinks he might be brave enough to say *fuck distance* and accept the soft, concerned olive branch Eddie had just offered him.

“I uh... had a dream,” Richie says. He doesn’t know what else to say. *‘I dreamt you died, and it choked me, drowned me, and I couldn’t breathe without you,’*? Fat fucking chance.

“Okay,” Eddie replies, remarkably more patient than he usually is. Richie thinks it might be because he’s still vaguely asleep, and can’t help smiling a little, even though his face feels tight and wrong and close to tears. “Do you wanna tell me about it, or did you just call to tell me you dream, like, in general? ‘Cause newsflash, asshole, yeah, everyone does.”

There he is, Richie thinks, and smiles wider. His cheeks feel warm, and they’re probably wet, too, ‘cause he’s definitely crying now, like an idiot. He sniffs, and chuckles a little, and hears Eddie suck in a breath.

“Richie,” he says, almost whispering, like he thinks if he talks too loudly Richie is gonna start sobbing his eyes out. *Maybe not far off*, Richie thinks, because his body feels poised on the edge of *something*, like at any moment it’ll crack and crumble, and he’s gonna turn to dust, swallowed by his expensive Egyptian cotton sheets.

“Richie,” Eddie tries again, speaking at the same quiet level as before. “Tell me what happened.” There’s the sound of more rustling, like Eddie is getting out of bed, and suddenly Richie is reminded of—of Eddie’s wife. Oh *god*, had he been *in bed* with her? Had Richie woken them both up, and... He cuts the train of thought off, focusing instead on the blurry ceiling above his bed, trying to blink past tears and

feeling like an asshole.

“I’m sorry,” Richie whispers, unable to help it.

“What the fuck,” Eddie replies, gentle and bemused. Richie thinks he hears him walking somewhere. “Why are you sorry?”

Richie swallows past the lump in his throat, sucks in a breath. “I—I didn’t wake your wife up, did I?”

Eddie actually laughs. It sounds kind of bitter, and maybe a little sad, but also... genuinely amused.

“My fucking *wife*? That’s what you’re worried about? You call me at—at four-fucking-am, crying—” Richie makes a noise of protest, but it’s mostly negated by the fact that he kinda *is* crying—“and the literal first thing you apologize for is *maybe* waking up my wife?”

“Yes?” Richie isn’t quite sure what’s happening. This has gone off the rails. He’s still crying, but at least he’s managing to be quiet about it.

Eddie snorts, but seems to sober quickly. “I’m—We’re separated, um... I have an apartment that I—that I kept, so... I’m living there—well, here. I’m living here.”

“Oh,” Richie replies, at a loss for words. He feels overly aware of his body, feels the tracks the tears are making down his cheeks.

“Yeah, *oh*,” Eddie says, trying to imitate Richie’s one-word response but definitely making him sound *way* more stupid, in Richie’s opinion.

“I’m, uh... sorry?” Richie tries.

“Shut up,” Eddie says, dismissive. “Stop apologizing, and—and derailing the conversation. I wasn’t the one who called you at a fucking ungodly hour. We can—” Eddie pauses, and sucks in a deep breath, lets it out. “We can talk about it—about me, and—and my, uh, *ex-wife*... another time, if you want.”

“Okay,” Richie replies, and sniffs again. He thinks he’s finally stopped crying, maybe, but then Eddie says, “Tell me about your dream,” and the shuddering breath he sucks in seems to claw its way up through his throat, and fresh tears spring to his eyes.

Richie tells him. He doesn’t think he could deny Eddie anything right now, still raw from the dream and from the immense relief of hearing Eddie’s voice afterwards, and from the undeniable comfort of his voice in general. He feels like Eddie could be right beside him as he grips the phone tighter. He *wishes* Eddie was right beside him.

He says: “You died, and I think it—I think it killed me, a bit.”

“Oh, Richie,” Eddie sighs out, sounding for all the world like he’s just been told a very, very sad story. He also sounds like an adult, and yeah, they both technically *are* adults, but—but Eddie has just said

'Oh, Richie,' the same way Richie's mother used to, when he'd gone to her in tears as a kid. It is both a comfort and *deeply embarrassing* to hear the same tone from Eddie, his *best friend*, whose hand he had held after Eddie had scraped his knee on the playground in the fifth grade and couldn't stop crying. He remembers Eddie trying not to cry, because they'd grown out of crying when they got hurt, like, a year before, but Eddie had always been a bit more sensitive. Richie thinks he cried into his teens; he wonders if he cried into his twenties as well, and feels the familiar ache of having missed such a huge part of Eddie's life.

"I feel like I'm going out of my mind," Richie whispers, and laughs. It sounds a little manic to his ears, and he winces.

"Richie, are you—I mean, you're alone right?" Eddie asks, and there's the sound of... clicking, in the background. Typing? *Is he answering emails right now, in the middle of my depressing one-am breakdown?* Richie wonders, hurt but kind of amused, in a maudlin sort of way.

"Um, yeah, who the fuck else is gonna be here?" Richie replies, flopping back in bed and curling into himself.

"I don't know, asshole!" Eddie shoots back. "Maybe you have, like... *company* over." He says *company* in a kind of mock-sultry tone, and Richie thinks *Oh*, and almost laughs.

"You think I'd be calling you on the fucking phone if I was *in bed with someone?*" Richie asks. "Like, *'hey, hold on baby, let me just call up my buddy for a quick sec, I've gotta tell him about a dream I just had, cry for a bit, and then we can go back to the crazy sex?'*"

“I don’t know!” Eddie repeats, shrill. “Maybe you fuck to cope! Maybe this is all part of some fucked up therapy!” The tone of his voice reminds Richie of when they were kids and they’d bicker, and Eddie would get so fed up he’d scream. The thought makes Richie’s chest ache. He thinks he’s finally stopped crying, but now his face feels hot and puffy. Not much better, really.

“Fuck to cope? Seriously?” Richie actually does laugh this time.

“I’m hanging up. Fucking cry yourself to sleep, see if I care.”

“I promise you, Eds, I wouldn’t call you if I was like, mid-therapy fuck,” Richie assures him, voice rough, from suppressed laughter or maybe the tears from earlier.

“Okay,” Eddie replies, softly. Richie remembers that, too, from when they were kids; the way Eddie could go from seething one moment to gentle the next. It was one of Richie’s favourite things about him—it still is, now that Richie knows it’s still part of the Eddie Kaspbrak Experience.

“Can you be at the airport in like, eight hours?” Eddie asks, apropos of nothing.

Richie breathes out a short laugh. “Um, what?”

“The airport, idiot, can you be there? I mean, I could, like, Uber to your apartment...house? Do you live in an apartment or a house?

Fuck, why haven't we talked about this before now, I don't know anything about LA... Anyways, yeah, eight hours, can you do it?" Eddie is rambling, and Richie would be comforted by the familiarity if he had any idea what the fuck was going on.

"You're... Which airport?" Richie asks, dazed.

"Fucking Tokyo International, what do you think? LAX, dummy" Eddie replies.

"Oh," Richie says, like a dummy. "Okay, eight hours."

Eddie hums "Okay, good. I've texted you my flight details so you can't claim you had no idea when I was arriving and show up, like, two hours late."

Richie feels his phone vibrate with a message, and that's what seems to make the other shoe drop. *Eddie is coming to LA*. He's coming to LA, because Richie called him on the phone and had a breakdown, and Eddie wants to be there for him, *physically* be there for him.

Richie loves him so much he feels like he could shake apart.

He thinks he's always felt this way, deep down.

"Just so you know what you're getting yourself into," Richie says conversationally, "I haven't like, cleaned my place since I got back."

“Well, you’ve got about eight hours to remedy that don’t you?” Eddie replies matter-of-factly.

Richie laughs, and says, “Yeah, I guess I do, huh.”

Richie does not deep clean his house, no matter how clearly he can hear Eddie’s disgusted noises at the state of his kitchen and bathrooms in his mind. It’s not that they’re *dirty*, per se (because contrary to popular belief, Richie *does* know how to clean shit), they’re just not up to Eddie Kaspbrak’s standards. But Richie kinda realized how fucking exhausted he was after him and Eddie hung up, and promptly passed the fuck out after setting not one, not three, but *five* alarms to make sure he would wake up on time and avoid getting murdered by Eddie for showing up even ten minutes late.

The first alarm manages to wake him up, surprisingly. Maybe it’s because he slept so fitfully, despite being so tired. Richie remembers feeling like this in his twenties, sometimes—exhausted, and yet unable to actually get a good night’s sleep, almost like he’d gone to the gym in his sleep. Whatever the reason, he’s awake earlier than he *technically* needs to be, so he gets up and putters around, vaguely cleaning.

When Richie finally deems it a reasonable time to leave for the airport, he makes his way out to the car, ready to brave Los Angeles traffic. He hooks his phone up, but decides to just put the radio on, settling on some 80s throwback channel with an obnoxiously upbeat host.

“I hope you’re all making the most of the warm weather!” the host says, peppier than anyone has any right to be so early in the morning. *“Spending time outside, soaking up the sun!”*

“It’s seven-fucking-am, lady,” Richie tells her. “There’s barely a sun to soak up.”

She doesn’t acknowledge his point, and plays *“Walking On Sunshine”* by Katrina & The Waves.

“Good christ,” Richie mutters.

He makes it to the airport around 8:45. The flight details Eddie had sent him had indicated that his flight would probably be landing around 9:15, so Richie parks and makes his way into the building. Thankfully, there’s a coffee shop right next to the arrivals waiting area. Richie orders a black coffee, which he rarely does, and uses every bit of restraint he has not to chug it and burn the shit out of his mouth.

Finally, around 9:20, his phone lights up with a message from Eddie.

Just landed, it says. *If you’re not already at the airport, I’m gonna put a hit out on you.* There’s a knife emoji at the end, and Richie smiles down at his phone, smitten.

i'm at arrivals, Richie types back. drinking the worlds shittiest coffee, so a hit would be appreciated actually.

Oh, too good for airport coffee now Mr Bigshot? Eddie replies a few seconds later. I should've known. LA has spoiled you.

That makes Richie snort out a laugh, and he gets a few looks from the people standing around him. He thinks if he weren't so goddamn ecstatic that Eddie is here, *in his city*, he'd be embarrassed. As it is, he just ignores them, and sends back, *LOL, wait till i make u a cup of sweet joe outta my expensive imported beans.*

Eddie doesn't reply to that, and Richie assumes it's because he's deplaning.

About twenty minutes later, after Richie has finished and disposed of his gross coffee, Eddie is making his way through the arrival doors, looking like he desperately wants to be anywhere but where he is. He's lugging two suitcases behind him, and he's a bit of a ruffled mess from the air travel and, Richie assumes, the very early morning.

The sight makes Richie's heart lurch in his chest.

When Eddie spots him, his face lights up, and Richie can't suppress a big, goofy grin.

"Hey Eds," he greets, as Eddie comes to stand in front of him. Eddie rolls his eyes, and surprises Richie by pulling him into a tight hug.

“Hey Rich,” he murmurs into Richie’s shoulder, and Richie brings his arms up to hug him back just as tight. *God*, he hadn’t realized how much he needed a hug until Eddie was giving him one.

Eddie pulls back first, grabbing his suitcases again and smirking up at Richie. “Take me to your awesome, big-shot pad, Mr. Celebrity,” he says. Richie rolls his eyes, and leads the way back to his car.

The same radio station is still blaring 80s music when Richie starts the car, and Eddie wrinkles his nose.

“An 80s throwback station? Seriously?” he asks as they pull out of the parking garage.

“Yeah, man. Helluva decade.” Richie mimes playing an air guitar, and Eddie smacks him for taking his hands off the wheel.

They talk about small, mindless stuff as they make their way through LA traffic. Eddie tells him about his flight, and how the kid working at the Starbucks in LaGuardia had looked ten seconds from committing suicide by frother.

“How the hell would he even do that?” Richie wonders, glancing at Eddie out of the corner of his eye.

“I don’t know, dude,” Eddie replies. “But the kid looked like he’d

figure out a way. Like, he was *that* desperate.”

Eddie is also a shameless backseat driver, and critiques Richie’s driving any chance he gets. He *also* critiques everyone else’s driving, though, so Richie feels like it’s probably not just about him.

They finally pull up Richie’s driveway what feels like hours later, and Richie feels his body’s natural desire to relax at the sight of his house.

See, the thing about Richie’s house is that he actually, genuinely loves it. When his manager had first broached the topic of moving out to the Hollywood Hills just as his career was taking off, he had laughed. Richie “Trashmouth” Tozier, living in an ostentatious monstrosity of a mansion, neighbours with fucking Keanu Reeves and Demi Lovato, sipping martinis and shooting the shit—the image was truly laughable. But his manager had been serious, and gotten his newly acquired PR agent involved, so Richie had caved. They thought it would “improve his image,” or something, to be living amongst The Stars, make people think he was some kind of big shot. Richie just thought it would be a longer commute.

He wasn’t wrong about the commute, but after seeing monstrosity after monstrosity—*seriously*, one had had wood paneling on *every single wall*, and another had had an *entirely* red bathroom that his manager had said he could remodel but sent a chill down Richie’s spine—he’d found... his house. It was smaller than the other houses he’d seen, and Richie thinks that’s probably due to the fact that the realtor, bless his soul, was getting real sick of Richie’s lacklustre reactions to everything, and decided to say fuck it and just show him whatever he could get them a showing for. It’s sorta two stories, in the way that a lot of houses in Los Angeles are two stories—which is to say, it’s built half into the side of a hill so the “upper” floor is where the front door is, and there’s a half staircase down to the lower

level. It's got an open floor plan, and floor-to-ceiling windows wrapping around the front. In the other places he'd seen, the modern monstrosities, floor-to-ceiling windows had made Richie deeply uneasy, as if anyone could look inside and see him, and anything he might be doing. But this place was different, being higher up and surrounded on all sides by trees; Richie couldn't even see the neighbours, and found that this was the first house he'd actually *liked* the big windows. And this place had a *lawn*, too, which the windows opened onto (because all those big fucking windows open up in LA, it seems), and Richie *adores* his lawn in a way he never thought he'd love something so domestic and mundane. One of the only things Richie had told the realtor was that he wanted a pool, because he'd always thought that having a pool meant you were *properly rich*, and wasn't his image the whole point of this move anyways? So he'd gotten his pool, and it was smaller and less ostentatious than the other pools he'd seen, just a simple rectangle nestled into the corner of his stone patio, but it still did the job—Richie felt properly rich.

His manager had hired someone to decorate it, and the woman they'd brought in had taken one look at Richie and declared that she thought "the eclectic" style would best suit his lifestyle, and apparently that meant funky abstract art and bright coloured furniture. Richie went along with it in general, but surprised himself by actually having an opinion about some stuff. He'd vetoed a few paintings he thought were hideous, and said a firm no to any bright red furniture because it made his skin crawl for some reason. He insisted on a green rug that looked like an avocado for the living room. He made them leave room for some of his own kitschy nicknacks, and was genuinely touched when his manager brought out a framed playbook from his first sold out show.

The final product ended up being a house that feels surprisingly like home, in a way his past apartments never had. It's also blessedly *private*, and Richie loves that he can go sit on his lawn and feel the grass under his feet and just *breathe*, sometimes. It helps to ease the feelings in his chest that grow painful some days, and helps ground him, and Richie *loves* it.

Which is why he thinks he's so nervous for Eddie to see it; he wants Eddie to like it so badly it's almost painful.

Eddie smiles when he sees it, climbing out of the car and looking around. Richie thinks they're off to a good start.

He leads Eddie to the guest bedroom, and watches him putter around, setting his suitcases aside and taking in the decor. When he seems satisfied with the room and attached en suite, he turns to Richie and asks teasingly, "Gonna give me the grand tour?"

Richie snorts and steps aside, motioning for Eddie to lead the way.

They walk through the house, Richie trailing after Eddie and narrating what they're seeing, pointing out certain things that have more meaning than others. Eddie stops at the door to Richie's room, and turns to Richie questioningly, asking permission to go inside. Richie grins at him and gives a thumbs up, making Eddie roll his eyes as he pushes the door open.

Richie's bedroom is pretty plain, but he likes it that way. He thinks, in his weird hindbrain that has real estate opinions, that it makes the view out of the huge sliding doors stand out more. Eddie seems to like it anyways, whistling as he walks over. He pushes the doors open and steps out onto the deck, and Richie follows him as always, watching him take in the view of the sloping Los Angeles hills framed by the trees in the yard.

“Nice view,” Eddie comments softly, and Richie feels like the sappiest man alive when his brain supplies ‘*Yeah, it is*’ as he looks at Eddie’s profile, like he’s in a fucking Hallmark movie.

“Shall we move on, sir?” Richie says instead, putting on some vague British Butler Voice.

Eddie snorts, but he’s grinning when he turns away from the view to follow Richie back to the main part of the house.

They end up in the yard next. There’s a statue of Buddha beside one of the shrubs, and Eddie stops to stare at it for a moment.

“One of my sorta-friends in LA gave me that as a housewarming gift,” Richie explains, rubbing the back of his neck. “She said I should put it in my room and like, meditate with it? ‘To release pent up energy’ and find inner peace or something? But it felt like he was staring me down when I was trying to sleep, so I stuck him in the garden.”

“And here I thought you’d finally found religion,” Eddie deadpans, lips quirking up.

“Y’know, I *did* try to meditate with him for a while,” Richie tells him, feeling absurdly like he needs to prove he’s not some kind of religious flake, even though Eddie was never one for religion either.

“Oh yeah?” Eddie replies. “How long did that last?”

Richie grins. "About ten minutes."

"Shocking," Eddie drawls, not sounding shocked at all. "What happened? Get bored?"

"Nah. Got hungry."

"I think you'd make a shitty Buddhist then," Eddie replies, making as if he's *really* thinking about it, a small pout on his lips while he rubs his chin. "They're all about, like, denying yourself stuff and eternal suffering, right?"

"Well," Richie says. "There's me fucked then."

They move on, and Richie watches in fascination as Eddie crouches down to feel the water in the pool. "Is this a chlorine pool or a salt water pool?" Eddie asks.

"Um," Richie replies, stumped. He didn't know there were more than one type of pool until this very moment.

Eddie seems to sense his confusion, and stares at him blankly. "You bought a fucking pool without checking what type it is?"

"It came with the house!" Richie replies, throwing his hands up, exasperated. He should've known there'd be a quiz. Eddie scoffs at him, and promises to check it out later, sounding so confident that

Richie half expects to see him whip out a water testing machine from one of his suitcases.

When Eddie stands up, shaking off his hand, he looks around at the yard again and seems to take in the relative privacy. “Didn’t expect LA to feel so quiet, to be honest,” he says.

“I wanted it to be private enough I could fuck in the pool,” Richie replies, not saying that he’d actually wanted it to be private enough to be able to bring a man home and maybe even kiss him without feeling like the eyes of everyone in Hollywood were on him.

Eddie rolls his eyes and looks like he’s gearing up to yell at Richie for how unsanitary it is to have sex in a pool, but before he can, his stomach rumbles loud enough that they both pause and look down.

“Hungry?” Richie teases, and Eddie walks over to him and wipes his still-damp hand across Richie’s chest, smacking him a few times, before heading inside with a, “Yep, whatcha got in your fridge?”

The answer is apparently nothing, so they end up ordering food, and sitting outside on the patio to eat.

“It’s nicer than I expected,” Eddie confesses, looking down at his food rather than at Richie, but he’s obviously talking about the house and not the food.

Richie laughs. “Did you expect me to live in a shit hole? I have a

Netflix special, Edward.”

Eddie ignores his teasing and seems to consider something before replying. “I thought it might be... colder.”

Richie sometimes forgets that Eddie knows him better than anyone else in the world, and that even despite having missed twenty-seven years of his life, Eddie can still clock him.

Moments like this remind him.

Because his house could have been cold, if he'd picked any of the huge, utilitarian places his realtor had showed him when he was house hunting. He thinks his manager would've liked that better from an image standpoint, rather than his relatively simple house in a relatively secluded area. Richie thinks he probably would've been quietly miserable, sitting alone in a big, empty house surrounded by furniture he hadn't chosen and paintings he didn't like.

But because his instinct is still to deflect emotional moments with humour, Richie says, “You think just because I'm loaded I blast the air-con twenty-four seven? I'm not Bill Gates, man.”

Eddie looks up at him then, and says in a soft voice, “Not that kind of cold, Rich.”

Richie swallows, his throat suddenly dry. Eddie had always been good at ignoring or outright rebuffing his attempts to brush off

serious conversations with humour. He thinks about one time in the seventh grade, the morning after a sleepover, when Eddie had actually sat on him until he'd cried and confessed to having had a nightmare the night before. He also remembers Eddie being good at getting him to talk about It, the few times they'd had hushed conversations before they'd forgotten it had ever happened.

"I know," Richie replies, just as soft, looking away from Eddie and across the yard. The sun is glaring down, and Richie is grateful for the umbrella they're sitting under. "I'm glad you came," Richie continues, trying to push past those instincts to brush Eddie off. He's rewarded with a sunny smile.

They stare at one another for a moment, Richie's heart beating wildly in his chest, before he clears his throat and asks, "How did you get the time off to come out here so suddenly, anyways?"

Eddie hums. "Did you know that I hadn't taken one day off in the fifteen years I've worked there?" he asks rhetorically. "Before, um—before Derry, and this, I mean."

"No shit?" Richie replies, strangely impressed.

"No shit," Eddie echoes, laughing. "I guess I had a reason not to want to go home."

"Yeah, a pretty big one, I hear," Richie says, because he can't help himself, laughing when Eddie shoves him hard and mutters, '*Shut up, asshole.*'

“Anyways,” Eddie continues, ignoring Richie’s self-satisfied grin. “Company policy doesn’t involve losing vacation days, funny enough, so let’s just say I’ve got about a year’s worth of days off. Until they catch on and change it, obviously.”

Richie laughs again, and slaps the table. “Classic, Eds!” he chokes out, holding his hand out for a fist-bump. “Fuck capitalist pigs.”

“Fuck capitalist pigs,” Eddie echoes, returning the fist-bump, lips quirking up in a small, pleased smile.

They spend the rest of the day lazing around the house. Eddie takes a nap at one point, even though Richie promises to mock him mercilessly if he fucks up his acclimation to the new timezone. Eddie flips him off on his way to the guest bedroom, saying, *‘It’s only a three hour fucking difference, asshole, and someone woke me up at fucking four am!’* before slamming the door for effect. Richie laughs, and hopes it’s loud enough for Eddie to hear and know he’s been successfully funny. Once Eddie’s awake again, groggy and cursing his body’s false promises of feeling rested post-nap, they sit around on the couch, channel surfing and shooting the shit.

It’s a prime atmosphere for zoning out and contemplating shit.

Richie has never claimed to be subtle—doesn’t even know if he *can* be—which is why he has no idea how to approach the elephant-in-

the-room that is Eddie's (ex?) wife. Eddie had said on the phone That Night (as Richie has taken to calling it) that they could talk about it another time if Richie wanted to. Richie decidedly *does* want to, because weird post-Derry distance notwithstanding, Eddie is his best friend, and a divorce is a pretty fucking big thing for someone to go through. Because Richie doesn't know how or why it ended, he has no idea if it was amicable or, like, who broke up with who (was it still 'breaking up' in a marriage?).

Anyways, Richie wants to talk about Eddie's wife situation, but he is also not a subtle person, so he ends up blurting, "So your wife, eh?" Eddie starts like he's been shocked, and turns to look at Richie with wide, surprised eyes.

"Uh, what?" he asks, dumbfounded.

"Your—your wife," Richie says, like that explains everything.

"What the fuck," Eddie replies, blankly. "What about her?"

Richie begins to sweat, and blurts, "You said we could talk about it!"

Eddie still looks vaguely startled. "You *really* wanna talk about that?" he mutters, looking away from Richie to stare at the TV again. There's a bland sitcom on that neither of them had really been paying attention to.

Richie feels himself relax slightly. He'd always found it easier to push

through his nerves when Eddie seemed upset, after all, and Eddie seems upset right now—or maybe insecure is a better word, like he doesn't know why Richie would care about his life beyond the spaces Richie occupies within it. The thought makes Richie's chest ache.

"Of course I wanna talk about it, man," Richie replies, quiet. "I wanna know what's going on in your life."

Eddie breathes out a sigh, and shifts so he's facing Richie on the couch, bringing one leg up under himself. "Okay," he says, "What, um... what do you wanna know?"

Richie wants to know everything there is to know about Eddie Kaspbrak that he doesn't already know by virtue of having grown up with him, but he would rather die than tell Eddie *that*, so he settles on, "Who left who?"

"I left her," Eddie says shortly, growing visibly more uncomfortable.

Richie raises his eyebrows expectantly, so Eddie elaborates. "After Derry, after—after *It*, I kind of realized that my life fucking sucked? Like, I was fucking miserable, or whatever." He pauses, and looks thoughtful for a moment before continuing. "Actually no, not even miserable. Just like... I wasn't feeling *anything*."

Eddie's hands are moving while he talks, alternating between flailing around and twisting together, like he can't decide how he wants to get rid of the excess energy thrumming at his fingertips. Richie's eyes keep flicking down to watch them, tracking their movements and cataloguing them unconsciously while he listens.

Eddie makes a frustrated noise, and his hands are back to twisting. "I'm trying to figure out how to describe this to make it fucking... make sense to you."

Richie looks away from Eddie's hands to stare at the slope of his shoulders. They're tense, but pushed down, like he's trying really hard to look relaxed. Richie remembers him doing the same thing when they were younger, but it had been harder with Eddie's smaller frame. Now, with his broader shoulders, it almost works, and Richie thinks that if he didn't know Eddie so well he'd probably be fooled.

"Just explain it to me like you explain it to yourself, I guess," Richie tells him.

Eddie sighs, and seems to think that over. "Okay," he starts. "The best way I can think to describe it is like... I was playing a part that was written for someone else, except nobody seemed to realize it? I was living a fucking farce of an existence, and I felt nothing." Eddie rubs the back of his neck. "Does that make sense at all?"

Richie feels the hair on the back of his neck stand up, and thinks about the familiar crush of his comedy persona. Does the idea of playing a character that never feels real and chafes like shitty spandex make sense to Richie fucking Tozier, king of never being himself?

"Yeah," Richie says, mouth dry. "Yeah, that makes sense."

Eddie seems relieved, his shoulders relaxing slightly, and the sight almost makes Richie blurt out the truth about just *how much* he understands. Squashing the feeling, Richie turns to face Eddie more, mirroring the other man's pose and laying his arm across the back of the couch so his fingers were almost brushing Eddie's shoulder.

"You know what the saddest part is?" Eddie continues, looking down at his own hands as they twist in his lap. "I genuinely thought I was fine, that what I had was as good as it fucking got—I had a wife, a well-paying job, a nice house. I think... I think I *thought* I was happy, or as close to happiness as I could feel."

Richie's chest aches for him. He thinks about pre-Derry Eddie, sitting in his expensive house with his abusive wife and feeling for all the world like the nothingness he felt was all that there was, all that he was ever capable of having or feeling. It hurts to think about, so Richie shoves it down and grips Eddie's shoulder tightly.

Eddie snorts, and he sounds bitter. "How fucking depressing is that, huh? Living in a brownstone I didn't even like, with a woman who treated me like a fucking child, and working at a job that was—what was it you said in Derry? Oh yeah, *invented before fun*."

Eddie looks like he's working himself up, his cheeks getting ruddy like they used to when he was about to cry as a kid. Richie wants desperately to say something soothing and reassuring, but has no idea where to even start. *It wasn't your fault*, he wants to say. *You were manipulated by people who didn't deserve to even know you, and it was never your fault*.

Instead, he says, "But you got out."

That makes Eddie smile, and finally look up at Richie. His cheeks are still red, and his eyes are a little shiny, but he looks fiercely *pleased*. Richie's chest swells with pride. *That's my Eds*, he thinks. *Bravest man I've ever met*.

"I got out," Eddie echoes with a sigh, looking lighter—like he's exhaling the heaviness that had resettled over his shoulders during the conversation.

"Can't imagine the missus was too happy with you just up and leaving," Richie says.

"No," Eddie confirms with a bit of a wicked smile. The sight makes Richie's stomach swoop, and he has to look away for a moment before replying.

"So what happened, then? Did you just come home one day, say '*Honey, I'm leaving and I'm taking the kids with me!*' and go?" he asks.

Eddie ignores the quip about the kids, and furrows his brows. "It... it was actually a bit slower than that." He sighs, before saying, "I kind of... went back, and tried to, I don't know, workshop my own life."

Richie raises his eyebrows at that. "*Why?*" he asks, deeply confused. "Why go back?"

Eddie's back to looking down at his hands, and he looks a bit like he thinks Richie is going to hit him, or worse—judge him. Richie gives his shoulder a squeeze, trying to be reassuring.

"I don't know," Eddie mumbles. "The thought of leaving had always felt so... *big*. Every time I'd thought about it in the past, I could never think past the first step of leaving. It was always just me, leaving with a suitcase, and then—nothing. So I never tried."

"But this time you did it?" Richie prompts.

"Yeah, this time I did. The more I thought about all the reasons I was scared, the more I knew I had to." Eddie looks up at Richie, and smiles. "A wise asshole once told me that I was braver than I think, so... that was me, being brave."

Richie's heart gives a traitorous thump in his chest, and he feels his cheeks heating up. He grins helplessly back at Eddie.

"So," Eddie continues, clapping his hands together. "I packed my bags, told Myra I wanted a divorce, and moved into the small downtown apartment I'd been secretly renting for the past few years."

"Kind of a red flag, don't you think?" Richie comments, trying to dissipate the heavy mood that's still hovering in the periphery of the conversation. "Renting a secret apartment."

Eddie snorts. “Yeah. I didn’t really understand why I got it at the time, but I kinda like to think part of me sensed that I’d inevitably need a place to stay on my own.”

Everything Richie wants to say feels like it’s bubbling just under the surface. *You’re so strong. You’re the most amazing man I’ve ever met. I’m so proud of you.*

I love you.

He doesn’t say any of those things; he thinks they’d sound sarcastic coming out of his mouth, or insincere. He debates with himself for a moment before settling on pulling Eddie into a loose hug using the hand on his shoulder. Eddie sprawls awkwardly across his lap, muffling a noise of surprise in Richie’s shoulder, before finally bringing his arms up around Richie’s back to hug him back.

“I’m so happy for you, Eds,” Richie whispers.

“Thanks,” Eddie replies, voice still muffled. “I’m happy for me, too.”

Richie isn’t sure if he’s had a hug quite like this since... since he was a kid, actually. Even their tight hug in the airport hadn’t been like this—this isn’t just about greeting each other after a long time; it’s tender, and comforting, and Richie tightens his arms around Eddie without thinking about it. Eddie sighs softly, and his thumb begins rubbing gentle patterns across Richie’s shoulder. It’s taking Richie’s breath away, and he feels briefly like he’d float away if Eddie wasn’t anchoring him to the ground.

Eventually they pull apart, and Eddie clears his throat, smiling down at his hands as they settle back in his lap. Richie stares at him for a moment, letting himself bask in the depth of his feelings for the man in front of him, before turning away and settling back into the couch. Eddie snatches up the remote and pulls up the TV guide.

“Oh,” he exclaims a moment later. “*House Hunters* is on.”

Richie snorts, and Eddie scowls at him.

“This is a very good show,” he sniffs. “Maybe you’ll learn a thing or two about decor, since you obviously can’t decorate a house to save your life.”

That startles a laugh out of Richie. “I didn’t even decorate this! My manager hired someone!”

Eddie makes a show of looking around and taking in the *eclectic* decor. “Well,” he says. “I hope they were cheap.”

That sets Richie off again, choking on laughter and clutching his stomach. Eddie tries to keep a straight face for a while, pretending that he’s watching the nice newlywed couple find a house in rural Pennsylvania, but he cracks eventually, like Richie knew he would, and a grin splits across his pink cheeks.

They spend the rest of the night watching what is apparently a *House Hunters* marathon, cracking jokes and making fun of the taste of the people looking to make one of the biggest purchases of their lives. It feels so domestic that Richie can almost picture this as his future—sitting on the couch with Eddie after a long day, watching TV and shooting the shit. But that way leads to heartache, so Richie tries to squash it down.

He's only partially successful, in the end.

Eddie doesn't tell him how long he's staying, and Richie doesn't ask, too afraid of the answer and well aware that Eddie won't say *forever* like Richie wants him to. So since Richie doesn't know how long he's got Eddie, he makes it his mission to take him to as many shitty tourist traps as he can—within reason, of course. Richie wouldn't be caught dead at the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and you'd have to pay him to go to Universal Studios.

So maybe it makes more sense to say that Richie takes him to as many tourist traps that *Richie* enjoys as possible. He takes him to the Huntington Library's botanical gardens, and watches with a grin as Eddie *ooo's* and *ahh's* at the different gardens and their colourful array of plant life. They wander through the Huntington Art Gallery too, while they're there, but neither of them are really art people, so they don't stay long.

Richie insists that they see something at the planetarium, and they choose the 2:45pm show so that they can sleep in—or more accurately, so Richie can sleep in, since Eddie seems incapable of getting up later than nine am. The show is about space and

humanity's place in the universe, and they take it all in alongside two different groups of school children, whose enthusiasm is infectious and leaves both Richie and Eddie riled up and excited. They forgo any more activities that day in favour of heading home and laying around in the pool on big inflatable birds that Richie had bought earlier in the week—Eddie on the flamingo, and Richie on the golden goose. Eddie laughs and almost falls into the pool when Richie returns from his trek inside with two cool drinks nestled into even tinier inflatable birds. *They'd been on sale*, he says, *and now it's like our big birds have tiny babies*. Eddie splashes him, but takes the drink nonetheless.

Eddie ends up with a light pink sunburn staining his cheeks and shoulders, and he curses Richie's name and bemoans his increased risk of skin cancer while slathering on aloe gel he forced Richie to buy during an emergency trip to the drug store. Richie can't help but laugh, a bit, at his antics; they remind him so much of the Eddie he grew up with, who would yell at Richie for getting a sunburn, and extol the virtues of the SPF 80 sunscreen his mother made him use despite clearly hating how disgustingly oily it made his skin.

The sunburn fades after a couple of days, during which they spend a lot of time indoors watching movies with the AC blasting, drinking fancy mocktails Richie mixes up for them using recipes he finds online. Eddie seems surprised, at first, by the general lack of alcohol, but they never talk about it—Richie hasn't given up drinking altogether, after all, so it seems like Eddie doesn't feel the need for a Conversation about it.

Richie still gets the occasional nightmare, but he never wakes up feeling like he's being drowned in his friend's blood—only feeling vaguely anxious and deeply exhausted. It seems like Eddie can always tell, when Richie stumbles into the kitchen bleary eyed, that he's had one, but thankfully doesn't try to have a Conversation about that, either; he just brews him a cup of coffee and sits a little bit closer on

the couch than maybe he needs to while they watch morning cartoons. Richie keeps expecting Eddie to wanna talk about it, but he thinks maybe Eddie understands that there isn't really anything to say—they've seen some of the most fucked up shit imaginable, and are forced to relive it in their sleep, because that's the nature of trauma. Beyond talking to a therapist—which Richie has been looking into—Richie doesn't know if a conversation will really help, much. Eddie's quiet reminders that he's there, though, do, and Richie thinks he sleeps easier because of it.

Once Eddie deems himself to be sunburn-free enough for them to venture outside the house again, he forces Richie to go hiking with him. It turns out, in the twenty-seven years they've been apart, Eddie has become someone who, like, *hikes* or whatever. He talks about going for walks every day in New York, and laughs about his obvious efforts to get out of the house and away from Myra. Richie lets himself be dragged up through Runyon Canyon Park—which Eddie wanted to see—and even lets Eddie put sunscreen on his ears and neck. They come back to the house exhausted and sweaty, and are laying around in the shallow end of the pool almost immediately. They watch the sun go down while their fingers get pruny, and grin at each other like kids when they make their way back into the house to order dinner.

It feels all feels disgustingly domestic.

Richie is in so much fucking trouble.

They're splayed out on the couch in Richie's living room a week after Eddie's arrival, large pizza box sitting on the coffee table beside the

two mismatched plates that Eddie made them use. Richie is watching Eddie as Eddie watches the sunset outside, twisting his hands in his lap in such a way that Richie is pretty sure he isn't even aware he's doing it. It makes Richie think about the wedding ring he definitely saw on Eddie's finger in Derry, and he wonders if Eddie might've taken it off while they were there just to test it out, safe from the oppressive atmosphere of his life in New York. In any case, the way Eddie's hands are moving now, almost methodically, makes Richie wonder if he used to twist the ring when he was deep in thought. Richie kind of hopes that he did, that Eddie had had some kind of outlet for the nervous energy he'd been filled with for as long as Richie had known him. Richie wonders if he'd ever looked into those fidget toys that Richie himself had briefly entertained buying. Probably not, Richie thinks; Eddie had always been bad at accepting the messier parts of himself enough to actually be able to do something about them.

The memories of watching Eddie like this when they were kids, of picking apart his habits and trying to memorize the entirely unique human person that was *Eddie Kaspbrak*, flood into Richie slowly in a way that he's become accustomed to. It's how most of the memories of his childhood in Derry have been coming back to him—like someone is pouring maple syrup, chilled from the fridge, across his brain; it's a shock, but a slow moving one. He snorts at the analogy, and Eddie finally looks over at him, his hands stilling.

"What are you laughing about over there?" It's accusatory, but also fond, and Richie grins back at him.

"Just remembering some stuff," Richie replies, and Eddie narrows his eyes.

"What *stuff*?" Eddie mutters, accusation still laced through his tone,

but he also sounds curious, like maybe what Richie has remembered will help *him* remember something too.

Richie struggles to think of something less incriminating than *‘I was thinking about how much I used to stare at you’* and settles on blurting, “Do you remember those mixtapes I used to make for you?”

Not much better, idiot, he thinks to himself, wincing.

But Eddie snorts, and relaxes into the couch. “Oh my god, yes,” he replies emphatically, looking up at the ceiling. He seems to contemplate something, a small smile on his face, before saying, “I used to listen to them all the time.”

Richie is forty fucking years old, but the heat in his cheeks makes him feel like a kid again.

“Oh yeah?” he asks, trying for smug and probably missing it by a mile, but Eddie replies, “*Oh yeah*,” doing a poor imitation of what he’d once called ‘Richie’s Smug Voice’, so maybe Richie hadn’t missed his mark by that much after all.

“Do you remember any of the songs?” Richie asks, because part of him kind of needs to test Eddie to see if he’d really listened to them as much as he claims. Richie isn’t sure which answer he wants to hear more—that Eddie’s exaggerating for comedic effect, or that Eddie truly *did* listen to them that much, holed up in his childhood bedroom.

Eddie hums in thought, before his face lights up. “*Africa*, by Toto,” he announces, triumphant.

Richie throws his head back and laughs. Eddie is looking at Richie, smiling, and Richie grins back, helpless to do anything else.

“What else did you put on there?” Eddie wonders aloud. “Wasn’t there fucking... ABBA?”

Now it’s Richie’s turn to light up like a Christmas tree. “Oh *fuck* yeah,” he agrees. “*Does Your Mother Know*, baby!”

Eddie groans, and covers his face with his hands, but he’s also giggling. Richie is smitten with the way he can see Eddie’s ears turning red, and has to pull his phone out to distract himself. He opens Spotify, and says, “Let’s make a fucking playlist.”

Eddie barks out a laugh at that, but agrees easy enough, shifting over on the couch so he’s almost pressed into Richie’s side. “What’re we calling it?” Eddie asks, ever the practical one.

Richie rubs his chin, feigning deep thought, before grinning and typing out six spaghetti emojis and nothing else.

“No,” Eddie says. “Take the fucking spaghetti emojis off of there, asshole, before I break your fingers.”

Richie laughs, and backtracks. They settle on '*Eddie's Fave Tunez*', and Richie really has to fight for that 'z'.

"Do you have one of those fancy Bluetooth sound systems?" Eddie asks, and rolls his eyes when Richie nods, but still says, "Hook that shit up."

Richie hooks that shit up, and decides that ABBA should be the first artist of the night by virtue of coming before Toto in alphabetic order. Richie sings along badly, directing the chorus towards Eddie. Eddie is covering his face again, but he's grinning, and shoves Richie away whenever Richie sways into him.

The next song they agree was on one of Richie's mixtapes was *Bust A Move* by Young MC. Richie jokes about choosing it because he thought it was a good description of the love lives of every member of the Losers Club, and Eddie brings his legs up to kick him. They end up sitting with Eddie's feet pushed under Richie's thighs while Eddie leans into the back of the couch, posture open and relaxed as he looks through his own phone for songs. Richie can't stop staring at him, and keeps having to remind himself of what they're doing so he doesn't zone out too hard fixating on the way Eddie's hair is curling over his forehead, or how he wiggles his toes when he's about to laugh.

"Holy fuck!" Eddie exclaims suddenly. "*Take on Me*, man! By a-ha!"

Richie whoops, and adds it to the playlist before paying it. He tries his hardest to hit the high notes that the singer does, exaggerating his singing until Eddie is covering his ears and telling him that he's gonna wake up every single dog in Los Angeles if he keeps it up.

They end up shuffling a few playlists of eighties songs on Spotify, skipping ones they know Richie hadn't put on any of his mixtapes. The only one of those non-mixtape songs that Richie makes them listen to is *One Night in Bangkok*, because he can sing every part of that thanks to rediscovering weird eighties music in his thirties, and he wants Eddie to hear it. Eddie reluctantly admits to having heard it before, and startles Richie by being able to sing along. Hearing Eddie sing, "I get my kicks above the waistline, sunshine!" makes Richie laugh so hard he cries, and that seems to spur Eddie on, and he starts to sing along more after that.

The condition of 'only songs Richie put on mixtapes' is forgone, at this point. Richie plays *Once in a Lifetime*, which he'd never put on a mixtape because he always expected Eddie to hate it, and is shocked when Eddie jumps up from the couch shouting, "Oh my god!" before laughing and trying to sing along. He's moving his hands around in strange patterns that are making Richie dizzy, and Richie is so in love with him his chest aches with it. He has to jump up and sing along too, spinning around and trying to hide his blushing cheeks by pretending they're red from the dancing.

Eddie suggests *The Safety Dance* next, if they're playing weird songs, and Richie almost gets down on one knee right there. *God*, Richie thinks. Eddie really is the living embodiment of everything Richie has ever wanted. He's Richie's dream man, without a doubt.

They end up jumping around while they sing along, yelling the lyrics into each others' faces and helplessly grinning during the instrumentals.

When the song ends abruptly, they flop down on the floor, laughter

fading into breathlessness as some nondescript love ballad plays quietly through the speakers. Richie knows their backs are going to scream at them tomorrow, but he thinks it's worth it. Eddie sighs and looks up at the ceiling, hands coming to rest on his stomach. They're twisting around each other again, and Richie can't make out Eddie's expression in the dark to be able to tell whether it's nerves or not.

Richie stares at Eddie's profile, and the way the last dregs of orange-pink light are splashing across his face, and thinks about how this is maybe the most beautiful moment of his life.

"I'm really glad you're here," Richie hears himself say, voice soft and sleepy.

Eddie's eyes flick towards Richie and he smiles, before looking away again. His hands are still twisting over his stomach.

"I'm glad I'm here too," he replies, and sighs again. "When you called me, I... well, I was really worried about you, about how you were, y'know, handling things."

Richie snorts. "You were worried about little ol' me?" he coos, in his Southern Belle Voice. Eddie smacks him in the chest before continuing.

"After Derry, after—after It, we kinda... There was this space between us, or at least *I* felt like there was space between us. Maybe I was fucking imagining things, or whatever, but like... I wasn't, right?" Eddie turns to look at Richie again, and even in the growing dark Richie can see the pleading look on his face.

“No,” Richie replies, because there’s no point in denying it. There *had* been space between them, and maybe it’s the atmosphere they’ve created here, calm and bathed in soft evening light, that makes Richie feel like he can be honest with himself about it—be honest, and acknowledge that he’d been the one to put that space there.

He thinks about that one quote by some British poet whose stuff he’d had to read in college: “*Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all.*” Richie had always thought that was a bit bullshit, and while everyone had been swooning about how beautiful it was, Richie had raised his hand and asked, ‘*Why the hell is that better? Why is hurting romantic?*’ His professor had said it had something to do with like, the *true passion of feeling*, and that going through life avoiding things because you worried you’d get hurt was a surefire way to have a boring, sad life.

Well, Richie had thought, nineteen and living in fear that he’d look at a boy wrong and his life would be over. *Who cares if my life is boring if it means I never get hurt; I’d rather be bored than in pain.* And anyways, he’d never been in love, and didn’t even know if he was capable of it.

Except... Richie *had* been in love—he’d just forgotten. He’d been so in love he thought he would *die* from it, laying in the hammock in the clubhouse, Eddie’s hand gripping his ankle and snorting at something he’d read in the comic he’d snatched from Richie’s hands. Coming back to Derry, and seeing Eddie again, those memories had come flooding back—less like the syrup-slow memories he gets now, and more like a tidal wave, everything he’d felt crashing into him at once until he’d felt like he’d die from it all over again.

So the truth was, he had been the one to keep his distance, ultimately.

Because he's never loved anyone or anything as much as he loves Eddie Kaspbrak, and because he's still afraid of getting hurt, even after everything.

Eddie turns to look at him, flipping onto his side and resting his head on his folded arm. "I felt kinda lost without you," he confesses quietly. "You're... you're my *best friend*, Rich. You've always been my best friend."

Richie's chest feels tight. He thinks he might cry. "You're my best friend too, Eds," he replies, wincing internally at how watery his voice sounds.

"You know," Eddie says, looking in the vicinity of Richie's collarbone. "I think—I think being worried about you was a really good excuse for why I wanted so badly to come out to LA, something I could use to motivate myself to actually fucking *do* something."

Richie feels like he's been plunged into hot water, or maybe electrocuted. Everything feels charged, and he's holding his breath for what Eddie says next. But Eddie seems to expect him to say something, so he breathes out, "Oh? Why, uh, why did you really want to come, then?"

Eddie sighs, looking like he's steeling himself, before he meets Richie's gaze again. "I wanted to be with you, actually," he says. "Plain and simple."

“Plain and simple,” Richie echoes, faint.

“I was kinda lost without you, Rich,” Eddie says, quietly.

“You said that already,” Richie replies, equally as quiet. He feels like he might break apart at any moment.

“Can I kiss you?” Eddie asks, and he looks so fucking nervous... but he *still asked*. He put himself out there.

He’s the bravest man Richie has ever met, and Richie loves him.

“Sure,” Richie replies, voice breaking, feeling like an idiot. *Who the fuck says “sure” when the love of their life asks if they can kiss them?* Richie’s overheating brain asks itself. *What the fuck? What the fuck?*

But Eddie still reaches for him, sitting up slightly so that he can lean over him and get a better angle, before leaning down.

His lips are soft, and Richie thinks about how he probably uses lip balm because that seems like something Eddie would do, before he stops thinking altogether. Eddie’s leaning into him, pressing him down, but Richie feels like he’s floating, and has to reach up to touch, just to make sure this is *really happening*. His hand hits Eddie’s hip, and then his shoulder, before it wraps around his back, and he feels Eddie smile into the kiss before pulling away and resting their

foreheads together.

“Thanks,” is the first thing out of Richie’s mouth, and he immediately flushes, because the idiocy never fucking ends, apparently. He should name his next comedy special that.

“Thanks?” Eddie parrots back, pulling away to look down at Richie. “Thanks for what?”

“Um,” Richie replies. “For kissing me, I guess.”

That makes Eddie laugh. It’s a real hearty laugh, too, and it makes him tip forward until his face is smushed into Richie’s neck, muffling his laughter. Richie can feel his hot breath and it’s making it hard to think, so the odds of a more intelligent conversation than “*Thanks for kissing me*” aren’t looking good.

“You’re so fucking stupid,” Eddie wheezes once he’s regained control of his motor functions and levers himself up. He doesn’t go too far, however, pushing his nose against Richie’s before slotting their lips together again, saving both of them from any further opportunities for Richie to make a fool out of himself.

Stupid conversations and teasing laughter aside, the tentative bubble around them seems to have broken, and Richie is kissing back messily, feeling absurdly like a teenager fumbling through his first make-out session. Eddie takes it in stride, matching him move for move, lips moving together. He leans further over, resting more of his weight on Richie’s chest, and brings his hands up to frame Richie’s face. The new position makes it easier for Richie to roll them over,

and now he's the one leaning over Eddie, arms moving to bracket him on either side. The sun has finally set, and the patio lights have come on, casting a fluorescent glow across the living room and the two fumbling men within it.

They make out for what feels like hours, until Richie's elbows are aching and Eddie is squirming like his back is finally protesting the treatment.

"Okay," Eddie finally says, pulling back and not diving back in again for the first time since the make-out session began. "This is getting painful. We're forty fucking years old! That's like, fifteen years too old to be making out on the floor."

Richie is hard pressed to disagree, but can't stop himself from pecking Eddie's kiss-reddened lips one more time before pushing himself up to stand. Eddie snorts and swats at him before pushing himself up as well, reluctantly taking the hand Richie offers.

They're both hard, and Richie thinks his inner thirteen year old is losing his goddamn mind right now, because holy shit, *Eddie Kaspbrak was hard just from kissing him*. It's probably that thirteen year old that can't stop looking down at where Eddie is tenting his shorts. It only takes Eddie a couple seconds to notice, before he's flushing scarlet and turning away from Richie to march towards the direction of the bedroom. Richie watches him go, grinning to himself, before following behind.

Eddie is in the guest bathroom, and he's got a toothbrush jammed in his mouth.

“Oof, wound my fragile ego why don’t you?” Richie sighs, pretending to swoon back against the doorframe and clutching at his chest.

“Shut the fuck up, idiot,” Eddie replies, but it’s muffled, so it sounds more like “*shuh da fug ub, ee-dot.*” He spits before trying again. “We just ate a disgusting amount of pizza, and made out for like an *hour*, so forgive me if my teeth are feeling a little fuzzy!” He stuffs the toothbrush back in his mouth after he finishes, and resumes brushing furiously.

Richie grins dopily at him, so in love he can barely stand it.

He thinks that’s the reason he picks up his own toothbrush, coming to stand beside Eddie at the sink. He watches Eddie out of the corner of his eye as he squeezes out the requisite amount of toothpaste.

Eddie looks like he’s just seen God, or maybe a two-for-one sale at the drugstore.

“Bottoms up,” Richie cheers, before stuffing the toothbrush in his mouth and smiling around it at Eddie in the mirror.

They brush their teeth in silence, and Richie doesn’t think he’s ever brushed his teeth this long in his life, but Eddie is still going and he can’t stop before him, so.

After what feels like an eternity, Eddie finally spits, and Richie does the same, and they rinse their mouths in the twin sinks before Eddie

finally turns to him.

They stare at one another for a moment. Richie watches the way Eddie's eyes are scanning across his face, taking him in, and it helps him make a decision. He grabs Eddie's hand—smiles like a smitten dork when Eddie immediately laces their fingers together—and tugs Eddie in the direction of his bedroom. Eddie follows willingly, only dropping Richie's hand once they're there so that he can tug his shorts down and flop onto the bed. Richie does the same, and then they're laying down, facing one another. They lay in silence for a bit, just staring at one another, until Eddie clears his throat.

"Those mixtapes..." he begins, looking down in the vicinity of Richie's chin, cheeks pink. "I used to listen to them and like... analyze the lyrics."

Richie remembers putting together the track lists, hands slightly shaky and cheeks flaming as he included songs like Peter Gabriel's *In Your Eyes* and Berlin's *Take My Breath Away*. He actually thinks Eddie had asked, once, about *Take My Breath Away*. Richie had made some quip about Eddie's asthma, and Eddie had shoved him so hard he'd fallen into a bush—but he hadn't asked about song choices after that. Richie had been both deeply relieved and strangely disappointed. He thinks part of him had hoped that Eddie might read into the songs and ask him about the lyrics and what they meant, but he'd also been so ashamed of every fleeting thought that maybe Eddie might feel the same way about him that he'd never let himself think about it too deeply.

And because Richie still kind of thinks the idea of Eddie being into him is all a fantasy, even though they'd just made out for like an hour, he raises his eyebrows and says, "Seriously?"

Eddie finally meets his eyes again, furrowing his brow and looking for all the world like he thinks Richie is a fucking idiot. It's undermined a little bit by the fact that he's blushing like a schoolgirl. "Yeah, dipshit. *God*," he breathes out. "I would spend hours with my fucking walkman in bed just staring at the ceiling, listening to those tapes and thinking about what you'd meant by including, like, *Every Breath You Take* by The Police."

"And what conclusions did baby Eds come to?" Richie teases, feeling his face heat up too. He'd forgotten about that one. God, he'd been obvious.

Eddie snorts and shoves at his shoulder, but doesn't pull his hand back afterwards, leaving it resting in the crook of Richie's elbow.

"I think—I think I thought it was another asthma joke. But..." He sighs like he's steeling himself for something, before continuing. "I didn't want it to be a joke."

Richie feels like he's been punched in the chest, his heart pounding wildly.

When he doesn't say anything for a moment, Eddie chuckles, self-deprecating. "It was absolutely a joke, right? Ha ha, I get it, let's mock the kid with asthma! You know, that shit is actually serious, okay? It's not a joke, people die from it, and—"

Richie cuts him off before he can talk himself out of it. "It wasn't a

joke.”

Eddie snaps his mouth shut, and stares really hard for a moment. “If you’re fucking with me, Richie...” he whispers, his voice a dangerous mix of repressed anger and what Richie realizes with a jolt is tears.

“Eds, I wouldn’t,” Richie replies, chest aching. “Not about this.”

Eddie still looks like he’s torn between crying and getting up and leaving, so Richie does the only thing he can think to do—he starts quietly singing *Take My Breath Away*.

“You asked me about this song, once,” Richie says after singing the first chorus.

“I remember,” Eddie replies, quiet. “You’re a terrible singer, by the way.”

“Shut up,” Richie says, dismissive. “I said it was about your asthma, and you pushed me into a bush.”

Eddie laughs, and sniffs. “Yeah, I was so mad.”

It’s Richie’s turn to steel himself; his turn to be the brave one.

“Remember when we watched *Top Gun*, thinking it was gonna be some cool action movie, and ended up getting a romance instead?”

Eddie snorts. “Yeah, you complained the whole time.”

“While you secretly loved it,” Richie shoots back, grinning. “Your eyes were glued to the screen during every scene with Tom Cruise and that chick.”

“Shut up,” Eddie mutters, flushing. “What’s your point?”

“Y’know how I know that?” Richie asks.

Eddie looks like he’s coming to some kind of realization, and his eyes are growing wide. “How?” he whispers.

Time to be brave, Tozier, Richie thinks, and says, “‘Cause *my* eyes were glued to *you*.”

“Oh,” Eddie breathes out.

“So yeah,” Richie mumbles, finally looking away from Eddie’s face to stare at his chin. “It meant something.”

“You—Are you saying what I think you’re saying?” Eddie sounds

breathless, and kind of in awe.

Richie laughs, just as breathless. “I guess... it depends on what you think I’m saying,” he replies, choosing his words carefully.

Richie Tozier has been a fuckup his whole life, but he thinks a lot of that has to do with the fact that he’d never cared enough to really try *not* to fuck up. This thing, however—this *whatever* between him and Eddie that’s solidifying before his eyes—he won’t let himself fuck up this time.

“You picked love songs for my mixtapes, and that was on *purpose*, and not as a joke,” Eddie says, contemplative, like he’s reading off of a mental list he’s compiled.

“Yeah,” Richie confirms, and Eddie’s fingers squeeze around the bend of his elbow where they’re still resting.

“And—and you stared at me when we watched a romantic movie—”

“That’s not the only time I stared at you,” Richie blurts, and immediately flushes, because even though he’s on the verge of confessing that he’s been in love with Eddie since he was old enough to know what love *was*, he didn’t have to reveal that he’d been pining like some heroine in a Jane Austen novel.

“Oh,” Eddie exhales. “I—I stared at you, too.”

Richie's heart thumps in his chest, and his cheeks get impossibly hotter. "Seriously?" he asks. "Why?"

Eddie scowls and flushes, retorting, "This isn't about me, stay focused."

"Eddie, I—" Richie starts, gearing up to just *tell him* and get it over with, but Eddie cuts him off.

"No, no, let me figure this out, I want to—I want to work this out." He's talking in that fast way he does when he's nervous, but trying desperately not to be. Richie shuts his mouth, but can't stop himself from reaching across himself to brush his fingers against Eddie's hand in the crook of his arm. Eddie sighs, and continues, "You let me kiss you."

"I wanted you to kiss me," Richie corrects him softly. "I've never wanted anything more in my life, probably."

"Okay," Eddie breathes, "okay. You kissed back, too."

"Naturally."

"You're... you're laying in bed with me. You're touching my hand and you're staring at me, and..." He pauses, and when he says the next part it's with a smile, "And you brushed your teeth for me."

“I’d do anything for you, Eddie,” Richie replies, gripping Eddie’s fingers.

“You love me,” Eddie whispers. “You love me.”

“I love you,” Richie echoes. “I love you so much.”

Eddie laughs, bright and wet and relieved. He pushes Richie onto his back and climbs onto him, pressing his face into Richie’s neck and sniffing around another laugh. Richie is grinning so hard he thinks his cheeks are gonna go numb, and he wraps his arms around Eddie’s back, hugging him tightly.

“Should I take this to mean you’re not gonna leave in disgust and never talk to me again?” Richie asks, aiming for a joke but falling kinda flat thanks to the raw emotion in his voice.

Eddie sits up, leaning on his elbows on either side of Richie’s head. “I might do the opposite, actually,” he says, teasing but fond.

“Oh?” Richie replies, hopelessly. “And what’s that?”

Eddie smiles, soft and happy. “I might *never* leave.”

Richie doesn’t think he’s ever felt this happy. Eddie Kaspbrak, *the love*

of his fucking life, is grinning down at him, haloed by the soft lights from the deck. He's just told Eddie he loves him, and Eddie didn't run away. Eddie wants to stay, maybe even forever.

Eddie... Eddie might love him too.

"Eddie Kaspbrak," Richie whispers. "Do you... Are you in love with me?"

Eddie gives him a fond look, and leans down to brush their noses together.

"Richie Tozier," he replies. "I am *deeply* in love with you."

"Wow," Richie breathes. "This is the best day of my life."

Eddie laughs, and he sounds so fucking happy that Richie can't help but kiss him. Eddie kisses back immediately, and rather than the heated kissing they'd ended their make-out session with, this is gentle, and achingly tender. Richie brings one hand up to cradle Eddie's cheek, running his thumb gently along the scar there. Eddie hums, and tilts his head into Richie's hand.

It's Richie who pulls back first, and it's because he needs to tell Eddie he loves him again, whispering it against his lips.

"You ruined me for anyone else, Rich," Eddie murmurs, lips brushing

Richie's on every word. "It's you; it's always been you."

Richie has to kiss him again, after that.

They make out lazily for a while, Richie flipping them onto their sides so they can share a pillow and not have to lift their heads up. Richie's lips feel like they've gone a bit numb, but in that way that means *really good kissing* and not, like, dental work. Eddie keeps nipping at them, too, before smoothing his tongue over the bites—it's driving Richie crazy, a little bit, and causing heat to pool unhurriedly below his waist. He thinks if he weren't so warm and sleepy he'd be inclined to see where that could lead, but as it stands he's down to just kiss Eddie senseless and then fall asleep, preferably spooning or something. Eddie seems to be on board with that plan too, his kisses growing slower and more languid. He's started softly tracing patterns across Richie's cheek, too, running his thumb across Richie's cheekbone and his stubble and under his eye.

Richie isn't sure if any touch has ever made him feel as loved as the mindless ones that Eddie is gently pressing into his skin do right now. He feels drunk on it, smiling into their kisses, and he feels Eddie smile back, and they're not really kissing anymore, just pressing their smiling mouths together.

Eventually they pull back, and their faces are less than a foot apart. Richie's glasses are digging uncomfortably into his face, but he'd have to dislodge Eddie's hand to remove them, and he'd kinda rather die than do that at the moment.

Except as always, Eddie seems to have read his mind, reaching slowly for his glasses and waiting for Richie's small nod before gently tugging them off. He reaches over Richie to place them on the

nightstand, and Richie rests his hand against Eddie's ribs as he moves over top of him, feeling him breathe in and out, and leaves it there as Eddie resettles in front of him. Eddie brings his hand back up to Richie's cheek, and continues tracing his patterns.

They stare at one another for a little while, both sets of eyes tracing across the face of their best friend, taking in every detail of how they've changed in the twenty-seven years they'd spent apart. Eddie's face is lined with age, and most of the lines are frown lines. It makes Richie sad to think about Eddie's life not having had enough laughter for him to cultivate proper laugh lines, and he makes a fierce promise to himself to try and make Eddie laugh as much as he can, for however long Eddie will have him. Eddie's hair is greying a little bit, at the temple, and Richie wonders if Eddie likes it or not. Richie himself hadn't been happy when he'd found his first grey hair, worrying that it signalled the end of the frat boy jokester image that his manager and PR assistant had been cultivating for most of his career. It had turned out that 'creepy middle aged man-child' sold just as well, so his hack-job career had been (*unfortunately?*) saved.

Eddie's eyes, however, are the same—wide, and soulful, and showing pretty much everything he feels at all times, from sparks of anger to the quiet affection he's feeling right now. Richie is relieved they haven't changed, haven't been hardened over the decades they've been apart.

The conclusion Richie comes to after staring for what feels like an eternity is that Eddie Kaspbrak is perfect—just like he'd been at thirteen when Richie was newly in love with him, and just like every year after that when Richie had continued to be in love with him.

Richie hopes Eddie likes what he sees as much as Richie likes what *he*

sees, and ignores the nagging voice in his head that still spews out self-hatred. He thinks briefly about that old adage, “*Nobody will love you unless you love yourself*”, and tells it to go fuck itself, because Eddie fucking Kaspbrak just told him he loves him, Richie’s lack of self-love notwithstanding.

Eddie furrows his brow, seemingly considering something, before asking, “When did you, y’know...”

Richie makes a questioning noise, and Eddie huffs out a frustrated breath, before continuing. “When did you... fall in love with me, I guess.”

Richie watches, fascinated, as a blush slowly spreads across Eddie’s cheeks, as if Eddie hadn’t been the one to ask Richie if he could kiss him, and confidently announce that he’s *deeply in love* with Richie less than an hour ago. Richie can’t help but reach out and trace the blush across his cheeks, and follow it as it spreads down his throat.

“Richie,” Eddie snaps, frazzled, and Richie moves his hand back up to Eddie’s cheek while he considers his answer.

Richie doesn’t think there was ever a specific moment that he fell in love with Eddie. He’d always known he felt differently about him, versus how he felt about his other friends—felt *more*, almost, like what he felt for his friends was the slow-burning embers of a fire, warm and comfortable, while what he felt for Eddie was a roaring flame, ready to consume him at any moment. There were probably hundreds of those moments, actually, where Richie felt like he’d be burned alive by *how much* he felt for his best friend, but he doesn’t think there was ever a single one where he knew, suddenly, that he was in love. He’d just always... known, kinda, even if he’d never said

it to himself until after their reunion in Derry.

So Richie says, "I've always been in love with you, I guess."

Eddie looks surprised. "Oh," he breathes. "Really?"

"Yup," Richie replies. "Little shithead Richie was head over heels *stupid* for tiny Eddie."

Eddie smacks his chest, before curling his hand around Richie's neck. He looks pensive, and says, "I had no idea."

Richie laughs. "Yeah, dude, that was sorta the point." Eddie furrows his brow, so Richie elaborates. "I was so repressed and in the closet I think I would've *died* if you'd known."

Eddie's brow is still furrowed, and Richie feels like he's been slapped when Eddie says, "But if I'd known, we could've... been together, back then."

"You—what?" Richie breathes, heart racing.

Eddie looks like he's about to roll his eyes, but takes in Richie's genuine shock and changes course, bemused, to say, "Richie... I've been in love with you since I was like ten years old."

Now Richie feels like all the air has been sucked from his lungs. “No way,” he whispers, in awe.

“Yeah, dipshit,” Eddie replies. “I sorta thought that was implied.”

“Never imply anything with me, Eddie baby,” Richie says, weakly. “When it comes to you, I’m struck stupid by love.”

“Shut up,” Eddie snorts, and shoves at Richie’s cheek. “You idiot.”

“Make me,” Richie shoots back, unable to help himself. Eddie actually does roll his eyes this time, but he still leans in to kiss Richie obligingly, and Richie kisses back with everything he’s got in him.

Eventually, Eddie’s kisses slow down, becoming languid pecks, and soon it’s becoming obvious he’s falling asleep. Richie half wants to just keep going, and see if Eddie will *actually* fall asleep mid-kiss, thereby providing Richie with infinite teasing material. But deep down Richie is a Good Guy, so he pulls away one final time—smiling softly at the way Eddie makes a small noise of protest and tries to follow his lips—and maneuvers there so that Eddie is tucked into his chest.

“I love you,” Eddie whispers, fingers gently clenching in Richie’s t-shirt.

Richie’s chest aches. “I love you, too,” he replies. “Go to sleep, Eds.”

Eddie murmurs something unintelligible, and promptly passes the fuck out. Richie stays up a little bit longer, staring at Eddie and memorizing the way the patio lights play off of the planes of his shoulders. Eventually the patio lights shut off automatically and Richie realizes it's like 12am, so he decides it's time for him to sleep, too.

Richie wakes up the next morning to light streaming in, hitting him square across the face. It's weird, actually, because Richie always closes the curtains before he falls asleep, so why didn't he—

It comes back to him all at once—dancing to 80s music, Eddie kissing him, Eddie telling him he *loves him*...

And Eddie, fast asleep against his chest.

Richie stares, in awe, at Eddie Kaspbrak asleep in his bed, bathed in sunlight and snoring softly. His hair is curling against the pillow, and his cheeks are pink from sleep.

He's the most beautiful thing Richie has ever seen, and he loves Richie back.

Richie must make some kind of noise, because Eddie starts to stir,

muttering a soft, “Wuh?”

“Good morning, sleeping beauty,” Richie whispers, pressing a kiss to Eddie’s forehead. Eddie blinks at him, before a soft smile spreads across his face.

“Good morning, love of my life,” Eddie replies, and Richie’s whole fucking chest feels like it’s been lit up from the inside.

“*Fuck*,” Richie says, with feeling, before blurting, “You’ve almost killed me and we haven’t even had *sex*.”

God, you idiot, Richie thinks, cheeks on fire, but Eddie just laughs, bright and open. Because he can’t help it when Eddie laughs like that, Richie goes to kiss him, but Eddie holds up a hand, grinning, and says, “I draw the line at morning breath.”

Richie groans and sits up, unfortunately dislodging Eddie in the process, who huffs out another laugh.

“The fact that we were too tired to fuck last night is tragic as hell,” Richie complains, sighing as his back cracks when he stretches.

Eddie hums, reclining against the pillows and unabashedly staring as Richie’s shirt rides up. “Well,” he replies offhandedly. “Good thing we just had a good night’s sleep, huh?”

Richie freezes, and looks at Eddie. Eddie raises his eyebrows, lets his legs fall open under the covers, and says, "Go brush your teeth."

"You're gonna kill me, Eddie Kaspbrak," Richie moans, already pushing himself up and out of bed.

"Oh, but what a way to go," Eddie replies, bright and sarcastic. Richie moans again, and hightails it to the bathroom while Eddie laughs.

What a way to go, indeed, he thinks, and grabs his toothbrush.

Author's Note:

well that's it folks !! my first finished and published fic, Completed... probably... i might end up writing a sequel (continuation?) where they actually have the sex i black-screened on, if i can make my cursed hands write smut

also, i recommend every song i mention in this, they're all bangers

anyways, if u wanna follow me on twitter my @ is paladinpeachs